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News from Lithuania...The Lithuanian Studies and Research Center...A Summer Christmas

P E R S P E C T I V E S

Where do we go from here? This is an oft-asked question coming from many Lithuanian-Americans. The work for an independent Lithuania, then the roads to NATO and European Union inclusion, and finally achieving normalcy in Lithuanian life has been and still is being addressed. So...where do we go from here?

Sometimes it is very surprising to look back at the history of Lithuanians in America and see the great achievements in the forms of cultural, educational, financial, social, and public affairs projects. Just the fact that an organized Lithuanian-American Community operates as an entity exhibits the unified purpose of maintaining a thriving bicultural lifestyle.

Since the reestablishment, many organizations in Lithuania and the U.S. have combined their talents to produce books, educational and social programs, cultural exchanges, and training opportunities.

One such example involves a U.S.-based Lithuanian organization whose members have been steadily decreasing over the years, but has found renewed interest in Lithuania. By combining their efforts and talents, they now publish their journal in Lithuania with works from both sides of the Atlantic. They continue to have camps in Lithuania and the U.S. — exchanging and cooperating for special projects.

This type of reciprocation repeats itself with other organizations, clubs, and groups. America's Lithuanian schools build their libraries with wonderfully illustrated books published by Lithuanian educators. Documentary and entertainment films have been subtitled in English to afford both Lithuanian-speaking and non-Lithuanian speaking viewers to enjoy the same content. Traveling music troupes — both American-based and from Lithuania — bring new songs to the U.S. and traditional songs outlawed during the Soviet times to Lithuania.

Where do we go from here? The sky is the limit! All doors are open on either end to extend Lithuanian culture and nurture its roots.

Rasa Ardys-Juška
Editor

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Lithuanian American News Journal

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BRIDGES Consultants

ALGIMANTAS GEČYS, President,
Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.
TERESĖ GEČYS, Information Services.
RASA ARDYS-JUŠKA, Editor
RAMAS PLIŪRA, Treasurer, Lithuanian-American Community, Inc., and
Subscriptions Manager.

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Photo: Rasa Ardys-Juška



Simonas Girdzijauskas
of The Joint Baltic-American National Committee, Inc.

Help Needed to Restore Radio Funding



Due to an unexpected schedule change, an amendment to the House Appropriations Bill (H.R. 2799) supporting restoration of funding to continue International Broadcasting in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and other East and Central European Countries, was introduced late on July 22 and ruled out of order. The missed opportunity was a setback to efforts by constituents to save Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty broadcasting from being eliminated to this region. Despite growing support among House members for the measure, the continuation of International Broadcasting to Central and East Europe was not discussed on the House floor and the bill does not include the necessary funding for those foreign language services.

Action now moves to the Senate with the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice and State to mark up the bill. With the approaching summer recess, beginning August 4, it is expected that a subcommittee mark up will take place the first week of September. The bill moves then to the full Appropriations committee, followed by a vote on the Senate floor. A conference committee of both Senate and House members will then convene to discuss a

final version of the legislation.

In this five-week timeframe, it is essential that calls be made to Senate Appropriations Committee members to ask that funding for these broadcasts be restored. Please urge Senate appropriators to help preserve VOA and RFE/RL being heard in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Your help is necessary to have funding for these broadcasts to stay alive.

Language in both Senate and House versions of the State Department Authorization Bill favors saving the services, asking for restoration of \$8.9 million (S.925), and supporting a two-year moratorium before any of the Central and Eastern European language services, including Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian, can be eliminated (H.R. 1950). The House bill was recently adopted. The authorization language should be supported.

Please mention that the language promoted by Senators Richard Lugar (R-IN) and Joseph Biden (D-DE) in the Senate Authorization Bill and Congressmen Henry Hyde (R-IL) and Tom Lantos (D-CA) in the House Appropriations Bill favor the restoration of the language services.

To close these European services invites a loss of U.S. presence in the region. VOA and

SIMONAS GIRDZIJAUSKAS is the contact person for JBANC, The Joint Baltic American National Committee, Inc. JBANC represents the Estonian American National Council, Inc., the American Latvian Association, Inc. and the Lithuanian American Council, Inc.



VOICE of AMERICA

RFE/RL broadcasting offers objective news and analysis about America and the world at a low cost.

The broadcasts should remain until the Baltic countries are fully and formally members of NATO.

Certain U.S. government agencies acted prematurely in seeking to close all the Baltic broadcast services, not fully realizing the damage to U.S. prestige and public image in the Baltics that would result by the abrupt pull out of the services.

It takes time for democracy and other concepts of freedom to flourish after decades of totalitarianism. The media in the Baltic region are still at times uncertain. We risk abandoning the airwaves to distortions and vagaries by biased broadcasters. These broadcasts are the most effective and direct way of communicating about America to the people of Europe.

House Appropriators should also be contacted, since the money still needs to be defended by House conference negotiators in the final bill. A vote to restore funding in the Senate Appropriations committee would improve chances for having these funds in the final bill, which comes out of the conference committee. A complete list of Appropriations committee members and contact information can be obtained by visiting <http://congress.org> or by calling the Capitol Hill Operator at: 202-224-3121.

Senate Appropriations Commerce/Justice/State Subcommittee Members to Contact are:

- ◆ Subcommittee Chairman Judd Gregg (R-NH),
- ◆ Ranking Member Ernest Hollings (D-SC) and the other members of the subcommittee: Pete Domenici (R-NM), Mitch McConnell (R-KY), Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX), Ben Nighthorse Campbell (R-CO), Daniel Inouye (D-HI), Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Herb Kohl (D-WI), Patty Murray (D-WA),
- ◆ as well as Chairman of the Appropriations Committee Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) and Ranking Member Robert Byrd (D-WV).

Other members of the Senate Appropriations Committee are: Thad Cochran (R-MS), Arlen Specter (R-PA), Christopher Bond (R-MO), Conrad Burns (R-MT), Richard Shelby (R-AL), Robert Bennett (R-UT), Larry Craig (R-ID), Mike DeWine (R-OH), Sam Brownback (R-KS), Tom Harkin (D-IA), Harry Reid (D-NV), Byron Dorgan (D-ND), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Richard Durbin (D-IL), Tim Johnson (D-SD), and Mary Landrieu (D-LA). ◆



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and ideas through any media
regardless of frontiers"
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"The Washington Times" features story on changes in Baltic diplomacy with Russia

A UPI news story, which appeared in the Aug. 6th *Washington Times*, said that Baltic States officials are changing their diplomatic stance. They have become far more relaxed about their giant Russian neighbor than anyone could have imagined, Latvian news agency LETA reported.



tic officials, was a stronger, more effective Russian national state, not a weaker one. Russia needs a state structure better able to control crime and give hope for a future to its European population, and this was essential for Baltic security as well, they said.

The extensive article goes on to report that representatives of the three tiny Baltic republics of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia were in Washington in early August discussing regional security problems at a meeting of the Transatlantic Studies Center at the School for Advanced International Studies, but they did not say a word about any Russian threat. On the contrary, there was a complete absence of anti-Russian rhetoric. Instead, the Baltic officials said they saw their security in terms of the threats faced by the entire Euro-Atlantic world: terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, intra-European stability, and demographic imbalances in light of declining European populations.

Russia arose as a problem in this context: because of its shrinking population, implicitly coupled with the rise of the Islamic population around and inside its borders. But the solution to this looming problem, according to the Bal-

Just two years ago, when NATO membership for the Baltics was still an open question, a similar session in Washington, held by Germany's Friedrich Ebert Foundation had the opposite result. It was a non-stop exercise in anti-Russian comments; the central argument made for letting the Baltics join NATO was that Russia was against it.

The only doubts about the wisdom of an anti-Russian approach at that time came in questions from the American audience, and the Balts redoubled their anger in response. The Estonian ambassador, in what in the diplomatic world passes for "a thinly veiled threat", said the Estonian people would not be nice to their ethnic Russian minority if, after all the concessions recently made to the Russians at NATO's request – that is to say, the reduction of existing discrimination against them – Estonia were nevertheless denied NATO membership.

But this time, the roles were reversed. The only mention of a Russian threat came in a question from the audience. And the Balts put

her down squarely. They knew that they lived next door to Russia and that Russian involvement in their countries was not in itself abnormal. They explained that the dangers, while not completely gone, were fading and being dealt with normally.

Why the change? Because the Baltic states have finally been invited into NATO and the United States has ratified their membership

protocols.

This has brought a sense of security to the Baltic states that they never had before. It has enabled them to face Russia in a more calm and objective manner. And looking east calmly, they can see that their actual living dangers arise from Russia's weaknesses, not its strengths. ♦

Lithuania sends off its second mission to Iraq

Forty-five servicemen of Great Duchess Birutė Battalion were seen off in the southern Alytus town on Aug. 4th before their 6-month peace-keeping mission in Iraq.

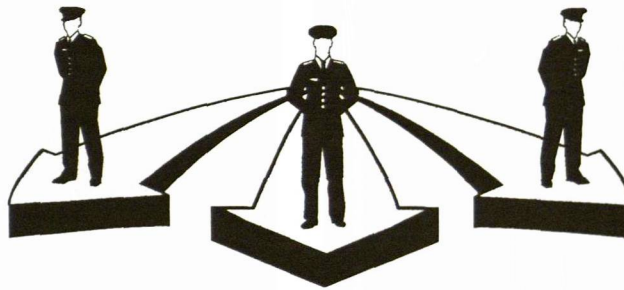
On August 5th and 6th, the servicemen flew to the Polish town of Szczecin to join the Polish forces, which were also heading for the Gulf state.

Defense Minister Linas Linkevičius, attending the sending-off ceremony, said, "Do not run risks without necessity. We expect every one of you to come back".

Lieut. Rimas Čeponis, the peacekeepers platoon's commander, confirmed that the servicemen would overcome all hardships during the mission because they were adequately trained.

Lithuania's peacekeepers will be stationed in a Poland-controlled sector of Iraq, Kerbala town, with a 0.5 million population.

Another platoon of the Lithuanian Algirdas



Battalion and eight logistics officers have been on a mission in Iraq since June. The peacekeepers are based in the UK-controlled sector to the south-

east of Basra. A new platoon will bring a total number of the peacekeepers in Iraq to 90.

The average age of the Lithuanians, based on the Defense Ministry's data, is 27 years. There are three women within the peacekeeping platoon: a medical officer, an officer in charge of military-civilian relations, and a cook. All servicemen have passed a strict selection procedure and a course on Iraqi customs and traditions.

With the new peacekeeping platoon, six Lithuanian missions abroad will number a combined 270 servicemen serving in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia. One Lithuanian officer is working as an OSCE observer in Georgia. ♦

Medininkai and Putin's visit important topics for Lithuania's President

Lithuania will take every political and legal action to bring the culprits of the Medininkai massacre to justice, Lithuania's President Rolandas Paksas pledged as he spoke on the state-owned national radio on July 31st. The president said, "this was the cause of honor" for the Lithuanian state.

Lithuania marked the 12th anniversary of a brutal massacre executed in Medininkai (frontier with Belarus) on July 31, 1991. On this fatal day, the perpetrators killed seven Lithuanian customs and police officials in a crackdown on the fledgling independent Baltic country. Romas Šernas, though injured heavily, survived this tragedy to remain the only living witness.

The country's law enforcement bodies have disclosed that servicemen of the Riga-based OMON (then the Soviet police task force) were the culprits behind the crime, are now in hiding in Russia. The Baltic state however has so far failed to reach a deal with Moscow on the extradition of the suspected OMON officers to Vilnius.

Paksas said during the radio broadcast that the Lithuanian officials who had defended the border of the independent state, with the Soviet armed forces close by, were as brave as ancient era heroes. He called for cherishing the remembrance of the Lithuanian heroes for centuries.

On the eve of the massacre, the outgoing Russian Ambassador to Lithuania, Yury Zubakov, met with Lithuanian state head Rolandas Paksas. He responded to Paksas' statements by speaking out against politicizing the trials of



the culprits of the 1991 Medininkai massacre and suggested investigating the crime "in a purely legal language" between the countries.

The two men additionally discussed the expected visit by Russian leader Vladimir Putin to Lithuania in the first half of the coming year. The president's foreign

advisor Alvydas Medalinskas said Vilnius must make serious preparations for this visit and raise new issues of relations between Lithuania, as an EU member, and Russia.

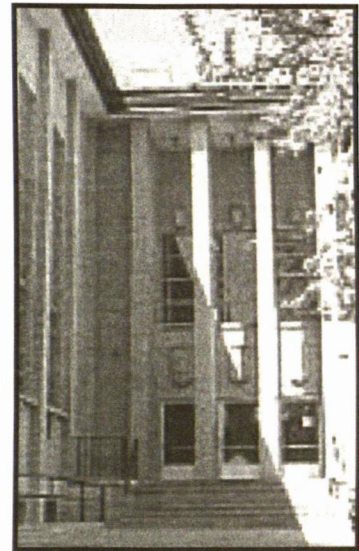
As for the sensitive D-6 oil-field issue, Zubakov confirmed Moscow's interest in conserving the Kuršių Nerija ecology and maintained that tensions surrounding D-6 arose because of poor information. Promising that Russian institutions would furnish to Lithuania the results of the ongoing ecological surveys, the ambassador could not specify the date.

The Russian diplomat said he was happy with his meeting in Lithuania, friendly relations between both countries, resolving of the Kaliningrad transit problem, and good friends, which he found in Lithuania.

Zubakov's successor reportedly will be Boris Tsepov, formerly Russian ambassador to Kenya. The diplomat has lately worked as the human rights department head under the Foreign Ministry. ♦

Compiled by Rasa Ardys-Juška
with information by Prof. Dr. Jonas Račkauskas and Aušrys Matonis

THE LITHUANIAN RESEARCH AND STUDIES CENTER



The Lithuanian Research and Studies Center, Inc. (LRSC) is a not-for-profit organization supported by donations from the public and grants from the Lithuanian Foundation. The Center, founded in 1981, is the largest Lithuanian scholarly organization outside of Lithuania. Its founding purpose was to unify various cultural, education, and scholarly organizations.

One of the greatest concerns was to rescue and preserve documentary monuments to Lithuania and its past: materials of archival, historical, scholarly, and cultural significance. Bringing various Lithuanian organizations together under the auspices of the Lithuanian Research and Studies Center, Inc. (LRSC) served to facilitate the coordination of scholarly work, research, networking, and the sharing of information.

The goals and objectives of the Lithuanian Research and Studies Center, Inc. are:

- ♦ to promote, organize and sponsor research;
- ♦ collect, assemble, archive, exhibit, publish and distribute materials, books, maps, recordings, etc. pertaining to Lithuania and its people;
- ♦ its language, history, geography; its culture, art, music, folklore, folk-art and all other matters of a related nature;

- ♦ to sponsor and conduct instruction dealing with any of the above-mentioned areas;
- ♦ to organize exhibits, thereby familiarizing the public with the holdings of the LRSC.

The LRSC has published over 50 books. One of them, William Urban's *Tannenberg and After*, was internationally recognized, appearing on the list of the 30 best history books of 2001.

The LRSC offers translation services, research services and library services to the general public.

The LRSC houses twelve large divisions, whose purpose is to research and educate, to collect, catalogue, preserve, and exhibit Lithuanian documentary history, culture, and scholarship outside Lithuania. These divisions are: the Lithuanian World Archives, the Žilevičius-Kreivėnas Musicology Archives, the Lithuanian Medical Museum and Archives, the S. Budrys Foto Archives, the Audio-Visual Media Division, the J. Dainauskas Library and Archives, the LRSC Fine Art Archives, the American Research Center of Lithuanian

RASA ARDYS-JUŠKA is the editor of *Bridges*. *JONAS RAČKAUSKAS, PH.D., LITT.D.* is the President of the Lithuanian and Research Center. *AUŠRYS MATONIS* organized the Center's information for the webpage. Photos come from the Center's webpage: www.lithuanianresearch.org.

Genocide, the Ramovėnai Museum of Military History, the Lithuanian Museum, the Institute of Lithuanian Studies, and the Lithuanian Institute of Education.

The Center's Origins...

The idea for the Lithuanian Research and Studies Center was born at the time A. Kantautas began preparing a bibliography of Lithuanian publications in the diaspora. He wrote to libraries, museums, and archives in the United States, seeking information on existing Lithuanian publications.

The Director of the Lithuanian World Archives at that time, Česlovas Grincevičius, could not provide Mr. Kantautas with any satisfactory information, however. This was because the library and archives were not inventoried; everything was in boxes and storage cabinets. At the time, the Lithuanian World Archives had no funding or staff who could organize the collections properly. This burden lay entirely on the shoulders of C. Grincevičius, as he alone was collecting and storing the archival materials.

When, in 1975, the monumental bibliography of Lithuanian publications by A. Kantautas appeared, nowhere did it mention the collections of the Lithuanian World Archives. Prof. Jonas Račkauskas, together with a group of colleagues created a plan to not only collect and preserve, but to register and catalogue the holdings of the Lithuanian World Archives, to make them accessible to researchers, scholars, students, and the public alike.

The Žilevičius-Kreivėnas Musicology Archives was in a similar state, in that there was no financing, no staff, and a lack of space and supplies. There were no telephones, copying machines or computers. The archives in question were, in fact, merely warehouses for historical materials.

The first volume of the A. Kantautas bibliography, published in 1975 (725 pages), notes that no reply was received from the Lithuanian World Archives while compiling

the bibliography and that no information was available. Only in 1979, in A. Kantautas' revised bibliography were the collections of the Lithuanian World Archives mentioned, because at that time the staff and colleagues of the Lithuanian Research and Studies Center, headed by Jonas Račkauskas and Robertas Vitas, had already begun their work.

After finalizing the plan of operation in 1980, which was based upon the decision to unify various Lithuanian scholarly and education organizations under the umbrella of one institution, the Lithuanian Research and Studies Center was founded in 1981. Among the founders were: Dr. Adolfas Damušis, the historian Jonas Dainauskas, Director of the Lithuanian World Archives Česlovas Grincevičius, Rev. Vaclovas Gutauskas, S.J., Bronius Kviklys, Dr. Arūnas Liulevičius, Dr. Jonas Račkauskas, and Dr. Robertas Vitas.

The primary goal in founding the Lithuanian Research and Studies Center was to collect documentary/archival material reflecting Lithuanian culture, literature, history, etc., so that it could be preserved, organized, and made accessible for current research and for generations to come. Now, more than twenty years after it was founded,



Vytautas Šliupas presents a gift to the LRSC from the Jonas Šliupas Museum to Dr. J. Račkauskas.

the Lithuanian Research and Studies Center prides itself on the vast scope of productivity and the many various projects seen to fruition.

The success of the Lithuanian Research and Studies Center is due in no small part to the accomplished staff of research associates, administrators, and volunteers. At the heart of the Center's operations are two of its founders – LRSC President Dr. Jonas Račkauskas and Vice-president Robertas Vitas.

The archives, headed by Director of Archives Skirmantė Miglinas, are ever-expanding thanks to continuous donations of materials from Lithuanians around the world. Once the materials reach the Center, they are sorted, registered, catalogued, and prepared for preservation. The M. Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania generously provides the archives and libraries at the Center with the latest publications and periodicals from Lithuania.

Currently, a Lithuanian Language specialist and research associate, Kristina Lapienytė-Bareikienė, is finishing the Center's latest publication, a catalogue of the Lithuanian World Archives periodicals holdings (the inventory consists of collections of some 2,300 periodical titles). Danutė Petrulis, a linguist, is the Center's publications editor and director of

translation services. Petras Petrutis volunteers as the Center's public liaison, preparing press releases and often coordinating research inquiries with the staff.

The Ricardas Printing and Graphics Studio is the Center's printer, and to date has printed most of the Center's publications. Ričardas Spitrys, the owner of the Studio, also provides computer technical support to the Center.

The following books have been printed in the English language on specific historical periods and a Lithuanian grammar review:

- Rimantas Gudelis. *The Process of Reconciliation within the Lithuanian Catholic Church: After the Soviet Occupation.* (\$18.95).
- William Urban. *The Baltic Crusade.* (\$38.50)
- William Urban. *The Prussian Crusade* (\$34.95)
- William Urban. *The Samogitian Crusade.* (\$28.50)
- William Urban. *Tannenberg and After.* (\$38.50)
- Gary Hartman. *The Immigrant as Diplomat: Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Shaping of Foreign Policy in the Lithuanian-American Community, 1870-*



In all, the Lithuanian Research and Studies Center has sent nine shipping containers of books to Lithuania. Here, we see one being loaded.



LRSC commemorative exhibit for Lithuanian Independence, 1918.

1922. (\$32.95)

- Demm, Noel, Urban. *The Independence of the Baltic States: Origins, Causes, Consequences.* (\$20.00)
- Henry L. Gaidis. *A History of the Lithuanian Military Forces During WWII.* (\$28.50)
- Jerry Smith, William Urban. *The Livonian Rhymed Chronicle.* (\$24.95)
- Edmund Remys. *Review of Lithuanian Grammar.* (\$22.50)
- Malbone W. Graham, Jr. *The Lithuanian Renaissance & Reconstruction 1920-1925.* (\$17.50)
- Juozas Skirius. *U.S. Government Policy Toward Lithuania 1920-22.* (\$17.50)

Visiting specialists from Lithuania assist in the archives and libraries. The LRSC has several on-going cooperation agreements with many institutions in Lithuania:

- the M. Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania,
- the Genocide and Resistance Research Center of Lithuania,
- the Department of Archives of the Republic of Lithuania,
- and various universities, museums, and other scholarly and cultural institutions, whose visiting scholars and specialists often advise and assist on projects at the LRSC.

The Lithuanian Research and Studies Center provides support to various institutions in Lithuania by sending books and other printed matter, many of them titles and publications that are difficult to acquire. To date, the Lithuanian Research and Studies Center has sent nine shipping containers (approx. 405 tons) of books and other printed

materials to Lithuania.

Scholars from all parts of the United States and around the world have visited the LRSC to do research in the archives. The LRSC has hosted visitors researching topics dealing with Lithuania from Canada, Japan, Italy, Sweden, Denmark, England and other countries.

The LRSC prepares informational articles on various aspects of Lithuania and Lithuanians for encyclopedias, continually striving to advance information on Lithuanian culture, art, and scholarship. Many a doctoral candidate from various universities in the United States has found specific data at the LRSC that he or she had been seeking but was unable to find elsewhere.

The Lithuanian Research and Studies Center is supported by donations from the public and grants from the Lithuanian Foundation, Inc., without which many projects would go unrealized.

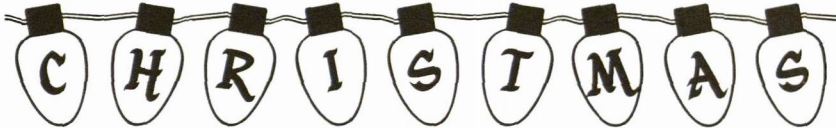
The Center can be visited at 5600 S. Claremont Ave., Chicago, IL 60636-1039, or contacted by telephone at (773) 434-4545. If you are skimming the web pages, visit the Center at www.lithuanianresearch.org. For book orders on the web, go to books@lithuanianresearch.org. ♦



Some of the members of the LRSC Board of Directors (standing left to right): Dr. Vacys Šaulys, Stasys Džiugas, Kazys Skaisgirys, Algis Janušas. Seated left to right: Skirmantė Miglinas, Stasė Petersonas, Rev. Kazimieras Ambrasas, S.

Jeanne Dorr

a SUMMERTIME



Can it really be mid-summer, and time to start thinking about Christmas? If you are in any way like me, you dread the commercialism that has overtaken this beautiful holiday. Even before Halloween we are inundated with commercials about the latest toys. Some of us long for the good old days when Christmas was kept simple, and no one dropped from exhaustion because they had a gift list a mile long.

Although Lithuania has been independent for more than a decade, Christmas still remains relatively simple – so far. It is almost inevitable that the day will come when it will be lost to commercialism, as will be the real meaning of Christmas.

Several years ago as I was traveling with Mrs. Landsbergis and Dr. Regina Svoba, I had the feeling that both women were stressed out about children, problems, and money. One of the major fears they shared was that there would not be enough money for children at Christmas. I couldn't do anything about their worries concerning children and other problems, but keeping you, the *Bridges* readers in mind, I knew we could help with Christmas.

Although these tireless women work separately, their prime concern is for children all

year round, seven days a week, fifty-two weeks of the year. Children and their families' problems aren't on a schedule nor do they pay attention to a clock. They just happen, and these women are there to help. As I prepared to return home I promised we would remove the Christmas burden from their shoulders. They were ecstatic. Readers, I didn't have a thought or an idea in my head when I made that promise. The only thing I knew was that this miracle would be performed by you and your generosity. This is the third year I am asking for your help, and every year you have come through stronger and stronger.

I did witness another miracle while I was in Lithuania that summer. I met Artūras. He was thirteen years old and lived in the small village of Klebiškis in the Prėnai area. Artūras was a sixth grader and suffering from leukemia.

He and his mother walked to the school to meet me because she was so ashamed of their house. She was a widow with a four year-old younger son. You could read the expressions of pain on her face and in her eyes. She knew Artūras had no chance of survival. He had been battling the disease since second grade and was losing. She felt guilty for leaving her younger son for long periods of time while she kept a vigil at Artūras' bedside when he was

JEANNE DORR is a member of the Board of Directors of Lithuanian Orphan Care, a branch of the Human Services Council of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. She is also a Social Studies teacher in New Jersey. All photos from Jeanne Dorr.

hospitalized in Vilnius.

Arturas gave me a rose, and we sat down to talk. What do you say to a child you know won't be alive when you return to Lithuania? We talked about a lot of things, such as basketball, school, and music. He grew comfortable enough to remove his hat, and there wasn't a hair on his head. I told him he looked like the American athletes who pay to have their heads shaved. A huge smile covered his face.

We did talk about the future. In a way, it was a fantasy because the three of us knew there would be no future. I asked Artūras what he would choose if he could have one gift. His answer was a used, blue bicycle. He emphasized used because he knew there was no money. He also knew he would never have the strength to ride a bicycle.

Artūras became tired, and we hugged and kissed good-bye. This was unlike most good-byes when what you really mean is until we meet again. This was really and truly good-bye. As I held him I could feel his ribs through his shirt.

Artūras continued to be educated at home because that was his wish. The day when the sixth grade class picture was taken, his mother and his classmates carried him to the school so

that he could be part of his class. There would be no more class pictures for Artūras.

That Christmas I received a card from Artūras asking me to thank all the people he would never know or would never meet who were so good to him. The Knights of Lithuania, Anthracite Council 144, not only helped his mother buy medicine but flooded heaven with prayers for a miracle. But it was not to be. God had His own plans for Artūras and took him home in May. He would not be part of the seventh grade class picture.

Although he never had a bicycle or very many material things in his life, I have dedicated this Christmas drive to his memory since it was started three years ago. His mother cried tears of joy when I told her that Artūras' spirit and bravery would continue to live through the generosity of the *Bridges* readers.

I often go back and look at his card when he asked me to thank all the good people he would never meet. I'm sure, if he could, he would thank each and every one of you who were so generous in the past. He had a loving heart and would be grateful that other children in Lithuania are able to have a small gift thanks to your generosity.

Why think about Christmas in the middle of



summer? It is because the money has to be sent to Lithuania and Mrs. Landsbergis and Dr. Svoba need to know approximately how much money they can spend. They will not be buying bicycles for anyone but rather small gifts for as many children as possible.

Three years ago it was possible to put together a small gift bag of chocolate, crayons, and perhaps a barrette for a girl or a small plastic car for a boy for a dollar. However, the value of the dollar has dropped in Lithuania, and so the cost will rise slightly for each child.

Mrs. Landsbergis' children come from Vilnius and the surrounding areas. This is a more "formal" event and they wear their "best" clothes. No one gets anything for nothing. They know they have to play an instrument, dance, or recite a poem. Professor Landsbergis is on hand for the festivities, and because he doesn't want to take the credit away from Father Christmas, he tells the children that Father Christmas has had help from many people far away so that he can give out more gifts.

Lithuanian children understand very well what a shortage of money means. I still remember one little girl looking very wide eyed

at Mrs. Landsbergis and asking her if she knew exactly when Father Christmas would be visiting. This was in August. Her mother leaned over and whispered that these were the only two Christmas gifts the child and her brother received that Christmas.

Dr. Svoba and Countryside Children's Fund go into the villages with Father Christmas. Most of their gifts are given out in village schools. The teachers told me of the great joy and expectation of waiting for Father Christmas to visit the school.

The desks are scrubbed, and paper decorations are made with love and care. The older children help where they are needed, and although they receive no gifts, they are just as excited as the little ones. There have been times that Father Christmas arrived at the schools in a horse-drawn sled. Once again, the children dance, sing, and recite for him.

Last Christmas there was enough money for Countryside Children to visit children in the hospitals. Thank you, readers, you made it happen.

I remember a conversation I heard between two children when I was in Lithuania. Al-





though I am always there in the summer, Father Christmas is never far from their minds. One child was sure Father Christmas lost his address because he moved so much. He actually moved so often because his mother and her children were squatters living in any abandoned house they could find. Maybe this year he will be in a place when Father Christmas arrives there.

I know that you get many, many appeals this time of the year, but please keep Lithuania's children in your mind and in your heart. Perhaps you would like to donate in memory of a loved one or even as a gift to the person who has everything. To our many organizations, how about a gift to the children who are Lithuania's future? You will never know whose life you are touching or what difference you are making in their young lives.

I want to thank Mrs. Landsbergis and Dr. Svoba, as well as their volunteers in Lithuania, for carrying out this monumental task. A very special thank-you to Birutė Jasaitis, the Lithuanian Orphan Care Committee, and all the volunteers for accepting the added work of the Christmas donations. But most of all, I want to thank you, the *Bridges* readers, for your gener-

osity. Without you, many children would not have even that one small gift because Father Christmas would be grounded for lack of funds. Artūras never got his used, blue bicycle, but you can bring a smile to another child's face.

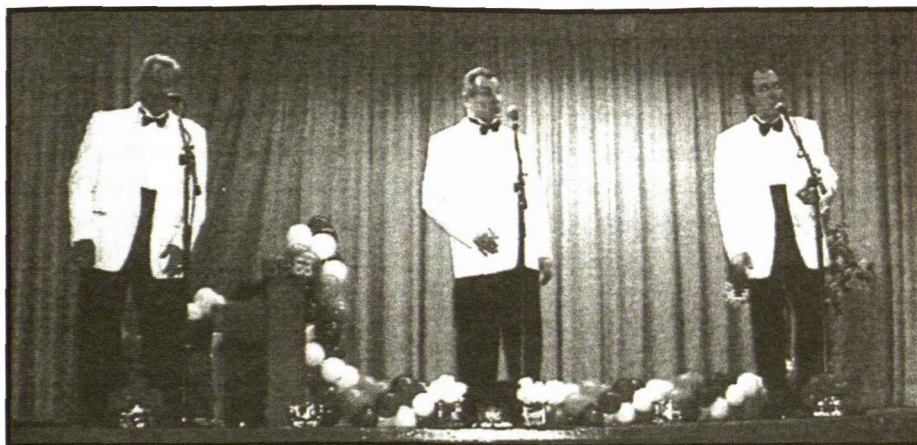
Somehow, not only for Christmas,
But all the long year through
The joy that you give to others,
Is the joy that comes back to you,
And the more that you spend in blessing
The poor and the lonely and sad
The more of your hearts possessing,
Return to you glad.

-- *John Greenleaf Whittier*

Please send your tax-deductible checks to:
Lithuanian Orphan Care
2711 W. 71st St.
Chicago, Ill. 60629

Please make a notation of "Christmas gifts" on your check. ♦

Laurynas (Larry) R. Misevičius



The "Three Tigers" tour the USA

The world famous Lithuanian Opera singers, tenor Virgilijus Noreika, baritone Eduardas Kaniava, and bass Vladimiras Prudnikovas, came to America for a concert tour in the middle of June, 2003. They were known as the "Three Tigers". Accompanied by one of the "Panteros" (Panthers), mezzo-soprano Judita Leitaitė, along with a well-known pianist Nijolė Ralytė-Prudnikovienė, the artists started off with a performance at the Lithuanian Youth Center in Chicago (June 14th).

They arrived on the East Coast for a Father's Day show at St. Joseph's School Hall in Waterbury, CT. Although the most distinguished "Tiger" V. Noreika didn't come to Chicago and Waterbury due to coincidental timing of the election for the Lithuanian Parliament ("Seimas") where he was one of the candidates, both concerts drew heavy crowds, and

people were very happy with the show.

According to reporter Steve Gambini of Waterbury's newspaper, *Republican-American*, the troupe entertained "a crowd of more than 300". The article went on to say, "the crowd didn't seem to mind [that Noreika couldn't be present at this concert], reacting with enthusiasm as Leitaitė, baritone Eduardas Kaniava and bass Vladimiras Prudnikovas took turns singing arias and folk songs before joining together in combination."

Unfortunately, the same day the Waterbury Board of Education had decided that it may rent the parish's school. The Lithuanian parishioners were planning a reaction to this revelation.

Meanwhile, June 21st marked the beginning of the "Lithuanian Days" at the Holy Child Jesus Parish in Richmond Hill, New York. The

LAURYNAS (LARRY) R. MISEVIČIUS is the president of the Lithuanian Sports Club of Connecticut and a frequent contributor from Connecticut.

“Three Tigers” finally came out together for their musical performance at the Rev. Murray School Auditorium provided by the Parish Pastor Rev. Daniel S. Murphy for a first time Lithuanian-American community celebration in the area.

A few hundred people gathered to the concert in spite of a heavy rain all over New York City that night and cheered for a varied program of classical and popular favorites performed by the “Three Tigers”, Ms. Leitaitė, and even the Prudnikova’s daughter Ieva, who came onto the stage to sing as a surprise to many of us.

After a really remarkable show, we also enjoyed a delicious Lithuanian dinner, including our ever-famous “cepelinai” and “kugelis” made for everyone in the parish hall by a Lithuanian-Czech family of Karel and Danutė

Dvorak. By the way, Karel Dvorak was also celebrating his birthday at the time, and the singers as well as all of the guests sang “Ilgiausią Metų” – a popular Lithuanian birthday and celebration song, resembling “Happy Birthday to You”.

Next morning, a majority of the participants came to the nine o’clock Mass at the Holy Child Jesus Church as the Lithuanian Opera Stars went on with their performance now singing “Ave Maria” and other religious hymns for a multinational parish community. On Sunday, June 22nd, “Three Tigers” gave their last concert in Elizabeth, New Jersey, at the Lithuanian St. Peter and Paul Church Hall concluding their U.S. tour. ♦



After the performance at The Holy Child Jesus parish hall, from left: V. Prudnikovas, tour organizer and sponsor Loreta Welch, Parish Pastor Rev. Murphy, J. Leitaitė, and N. Ralytė-Prudnikovienė.

Vitalija Duncia

...just a chance

If you visited Rehoboth Beach, Delaware this summer and stopped to buy ice cream in the center of town, it is highly likely that a young and vibrant journalism student from Lithuania, Lina Vaitiekūnaitė, served you a scoop or two. College students from all over the world flock to Atlantic coast resort towns during summer break to earn some money to take back home. Lina had the same dream — to work hard during her short stay here in the U.S. to pay off some of her college expenses and to help her mother out with the bills at home.

On June 26th, while riding her bicycle home from her summer job, Lina Vaitiekūnaitė suffered a collision on Route 1 with a hit and run driver who fled the scene, leaving her to die all alone in the dark. Fortunately, a passerby happened to see her lying on the ground about 50 feet away from her bicycle and called 911. She suffered severe head trauma and was flown by medivac helicopter to Christiana Hospital in Wilmington, Delaware in critical condition.

She recently awoke from her coma and was still recovering from her injuries. Once a bright, lively, beautiful, athletic, and energetic journalism student at Vilnius University in the capital city of Vilnius, Lithuania, she is now barely able to say a word or two. She has totally lost her ability to converse in English, although she seems to understand Lithuanian, and she is quite tired and weak most of the time. She is able to get up and walk a bit, although her balance is off and needs the help of

another person.

Thanks to her fellow college students who bummed rides up from Rehoboth Beach to visit her, and thanks to the local Lithuanian community in Wilmington and Philadelphia, Lina was constantly being kept company and was hearing her native language being spoken in the attempt to stimulate her mind.

Lina is an only child. Her heart-broken 68-year old mother could not come to the U.S. to be by her bedside due a host of infirmities. Tearfully Lina's mother says that the only thing she can do is go to church and pray for her daughter's recovery and eventual return home.

The road to recovery involving months of physical therapy as well as speech therapy in Lithuania will be long, arduous, and expensive. On top of that, Lina borrowed money from several people to make the trip to America. Money is being collected to help Lina with her medical care once she goes back to Lithuania. Your tax-deductible donation may be sent to the Lithuanian American Community, Inc., 2715 Allegheny Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19134 with the check marked "for Lina."

At the end of August, Lina is scheduled to return with a helping companion to Lithuania. She will continue to recover there.

As for the hit and run driver, Delaware State Police Troop 7 said that the accident was still under investigation, but they were questioning an unidentified driver after his headlight was spotted to be broken and containing human hair. ♦

VITALIJA DUNČIA and her husband Jonas are active members of the Philadelphia Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. — a community always there to give a helping hand.

Translated by Gloria Kivytaitė O'Brien

Perkūno Žinyčia

The Oracle of Perkūnas

(A Lithuanian Legend)

Kai kryžiuočiai, pasinaudoję suirutę, kuri, karaliui Mindaugui žuvus, įsigalėjo Lietuvoje, kelis kartus sunaikino šventąsias romuvas prie Nevėžio ir Dubysos, kunigaikštis Šventaragis sumanęs pastatyti didžiulę dievaičio Perkūno garbei žinyčių Neries ir Vilnios santakoj...

When the Knights of the Cross, taking advantage of the disarray in Lithuania which followed the death of King Mindaugas, raided and destroyed several temples of the old gods near the Nevėžys and the Dubysa, Grand Duke Šventaragis decided to build a large temple to honor Perkūnas at the confluence of the Neris and the Vilnija. The Duke was familiar with the area, having hunted there many times in his youth.

In the Taurakalnis valley, Šventaragis built a sanctuary, where he erected a statue of the wrathful god Perkūnas which had been brought from Palanga, and before it, kindled a holy flame, to be tended by vaidilas and vaidilutės (priests and priestesses). An area beyond the sanctuary was consecrated for the ritual cremation of Lithuania's Grand Dukes.

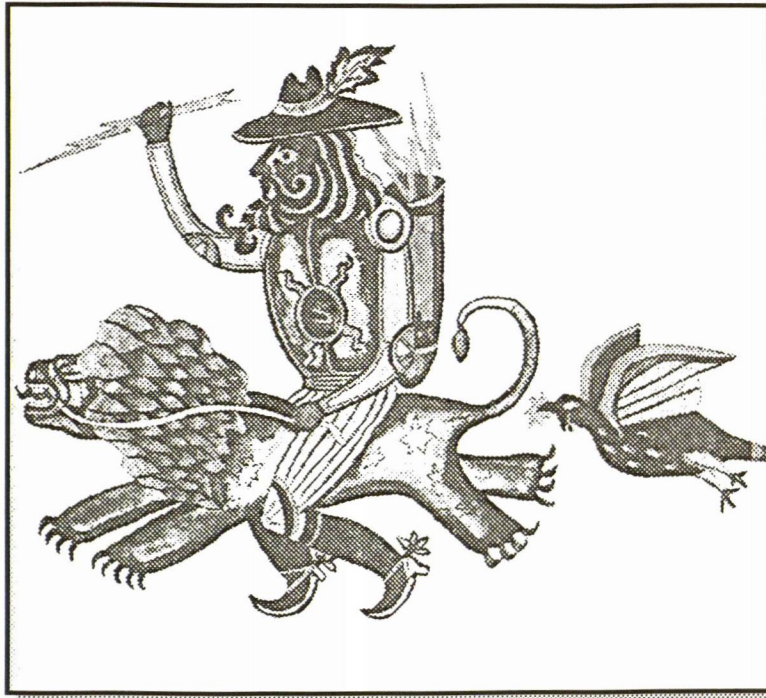
Upon the death of Šventaragis, his son, Gerimantas, carried out his father's will and,

making a large clearing by felling a group of hundred-year-old oaks, sacrificed a great number of animals for the glory of the gods, and in the presence of all of Lithuania's nobility, put the torch to his father's funeral pyre. In accordance with ancestral traditions, the Grand Duke was cremated with his most splendid armor and weapons, and his most beautiful robes. His hunting dogs, hawks and falcons, warhorse and personal servant were cremated with their lord.

In front of the temple, there stood a short round tower*, from which the krivės (high priests) would proclaim to the people the will of the gods, or follow the paths of the sun and stars.

As idolators, the old Lithuanians were superstitious and believed in magic and would embark upon no enterprise without first consulting the magicians, sorcerers, and oracles, of which in those days there were

*GLORIA KIVYTAITĖ O'BRIEN translated this and other Lithuanian legends, which come from the book, **Vilniaus Legendos**, edited by a group of Lithuanian and Polish artists and teachers: Albert Wijuk Kojalowicz, Jozef Ignacy Kraszewski, Vytautas Misievičius, Teodor Narbutt, Genrikas Songinas, Maciej Strykowski, Juozas Tumas Vaižgantas, and Władysław Zahorski.*



many. Some of them would forecast the future using water, others from smoke, salt, wax, the flight of birds, the direction of the winds, and myriad other natural phenomena.

And so the 96 year-old Grand Duke Šventaragis, a pious believer in magic, decided he should consult an oracle before building the Perkūnas temple. He knew of a sybil named Burinimė, who lived in Žemaitija, by the lower reaches of the Nemunas. He sent six grave elders bearing many precious gifts to visit her, inquiring as to the future of the temple.

The wise sorceress cast several spells and finally foretold that the temple would exist for as long as Lithuanians remained pagan. She caused 122 bricks to be made and inscribed each with a mark to signal good or bad years. The last brick was engraved with a cross bearing a double transverse. This was a sign that, when this brick's turn came, the Christians would annihilate paganism and destroy the temple itself. The Duke had those bricks laid against the south side of the temple.

Her prophecy came true. One hundred and twenty-two years later, Jogaila sold himself to the Poles, was himself baptized, and ordered the baptism of all Lithuanians. He then demolished the temple and on its foundation built a cathedral.

The cross with double transverse from that time on, began to be used on the shields of the knights, “Vyčiai”, confirming that Christianity had defeated paganism. ◆

** The bell tower of today's Vilnius Cathedral stands on the foundations of this tower.*

*** The same altar on which the ancient sacrificial flame had burned, can still be seen underneath the altar of today's Cathedral basilica.*

Illustration of Perkūnas is by author and illustrator of *Kur Nakvoja Vėjai* (Vilnius: Vaga, 1983).

C U R R E N T E V E N T S

“Baltic Times” ponders Lithuanian-Americans’ homeland ties

In a Baltic Times August 13th article entitled “Expats start to wonder on which side the grass is greener”, reporter Tony Pappa interviewed several young Lithuanian-Americans during their visit to Lithuania. He broached the subject of whether they saw Lithuania as a possibility for future relocation.

Pappa pointed out that during the 750th anniversary celebrations of King Mindaugas’ coronation, President Paksas expressed concern that Lithuanians were leaving for a “better life” and not returning. This type of brain drain would cause a significant economic dent for Lithuanian businesses and industries.

Pappa quoted Randolph Flay, assistant public affairs officer at the U.S. Embassy, who stated that a 2001 internal validation study estimated that over 50 percent of Lithuanians overstayed their nonimmigrant visa limits in the United States.

On the other hand, Lithuanian-Americans have been returning to Lithuania not only to visit, but receive education and then staying to start businesses, become educators, and working for American or European companies who want to make a go in the Lithuanian-Baltic market.

One such Lithuanian-American interviewed was “Vaiva Razgaitytė, a student at Cornell University who has been very active in Vilnius over the past year and half. Last year she was studying and also volunteering for former President Adamkus, and she returned again this summer to work for Baltijos Tyrimai, a Gallup polling group.

According to the article, Razgaitytė said, “I have ties to both countries. But I can’t say that I fully feel like I belong in one or the other. When I am in Lithuania, I feel more American. When I am in America, I feel more Lithuanian.”

“For Razgaitytė, at least, the dilemma is

easily solved. Her mother, Rasa Razgaitienė, works at Vilnius Mayor Arturas Zuokas’ office as his chief of staff and permanently lives in the city.”

“My mother’s advice to me is to do whatever I want. Because she lives here, she knows there will always be a reason for me to come back. So I can always feel at home.”

The article goes on...”Razgaitytė is part of a very large Lithuanian-American community established decades ago to preserve the Lithuanian culture in America as the Soviets worked at destroying it at home. Some 812,000 Lithuanian-Americans were registered in the 1990 U.S. census.”

Another young Lithuanian-American interviewed was, Giedrė Kazlauskaitė, “also highly active in Lithuanian youth organizations in the United States but is spending her summer volunteering at the Children’s Gate Charity, an organization for children of alcoholics and abusive parents. Kazlauskaitė’s grandmother was partly responsible for starting the organization and won the Medal of Honor for her work establishing it and other charities across Lithuania.”

She stated for Pappa, “It makes me sad that we who are not in this country are so much more patriotic than those who are here. Our families left the country because they had to, not because they wanted to.”

“When asked whether she was American or Lithuanian, she responded firmly that she was Lithuanian. But when asked whether she was willing to come back and live permanently in Lithuania her answer was ‘no.’”

Her reasoning for this was, “The Lithuanian population in America is so big,” she said. “That’s our life, those are our friends. Those are the people who I am going to grow old with. I have an extreme devotion to Lithuanian-American culture which is distinctly dif-

ferent from Lithuanian culture.”

On the other hand, Kazlauskaitė's friend Austė Kuolaitė who was in Vilnius “just to enjoy the experience of it”, planned to return for good in the near future.

Kuolaitė stated, “It's a deep down feeling for me that I know this is where I belong.”

The article explained that “she was raised in Los Angeles and San Francisco by parents who insisted that only Lithuanian was spoken at home. Aged 20, this is already her tenth visit to Lithuania and she does not understand why so many people want to leave.”

“It makes me very sad that people want to leave this beautiful place. I understand that there are financial opportunities in America.

From the Lithuanian Press...

Aug 12: Dickey Simpkins, a three-time champion of NBA, arrived in Vilnius with his wife Sophia and two kids. The former player of Chicago Bulls is to join Lietuvos Rytas basketball team.

A look at his luggage showed that Simpkins, a 31 year-old and 206 cm-tall NBA star, traveled to Lithuania led by most serious intentions.

“Most likely I will go back to the US for Christmas only, therefore we had to take so many things with us,” the basketball player told the journalists in Vilnius Airport.

—*Lietuvos Rytas*

Aug. 7: This summer, Lithuanian politicians are gearing up both for the new political season and 2004 elections to the European Parliament and the Seimas. Next year, for the first time, the Lithuanian electorate will have to cast their votes for the leading EU integration figures of the local parties.

Lithuania will hold the first election to the European top legislature on June 13, 2004. Any EU national staying on the territory of Lithuania will be free to vote during the election, and so will the Lithuanian nationals.

—*KAUNO DIENA*

But those who go there don't live so well for the first few years,” stated Kuolaitė to Pappa.

Pappa wrote, “both Kuolaitė and Kazlauskaitė think that Lithuanian culture and language is stronger at home in America.”

The article concluded with “all three agree [ing] that Lithuanians who leave the country do so for money and a better life. A better life, it seems, is a much stronger draw for many people than ties to their culture. There are a great many people, it seems, who prefer Lithuania as an idea than as an everyday reality. As Kazlauskaitė said: “I don't know how I can help Lithuania more than by being a part of the Lithuanian-American community in America.”



Aug. 8: The regional daily *Klaipėda* published marriage statistics suggesting that Lithuanian women tended to marry men both of different nationalities and races. According to the matrimony registry, Klaipėda seaport's women mostly prefer German husbands. There is a great deal of registered matrimonies between Lithuanian and Russian, British, American, Italian, and Ukrainian nationals.

The daily added that this year the oldest bridegroom in Klaipėda was a 99 year-old man from the US. ◆

—*KLAIPEDA*

Concerts...

There is going to be a concert by one of the most prominent Lithuanian pop and classical music singers, Janina Misčiukaitė in Philadelphia, PA at the Lithuanian Music Hall (2715 East Allegheny Ave.) on Sept. 6th at 8 p.m., and in Hartford, CT at Holy Trinity Church hall (53 Capitol Ave.) on Sunday, September 7th, 2003.

The Hartford tickets are available through the Sports Club Board members Linas Balsys (tel. 203-729-8815), Monika Karnusevičiūtė (tel. 203-400-1176), Algis Gelažauskas (tel. 203-248-5182), and Larry Misevičius (tel. 203-895-7147). The Philadelphia tickets are available by calling 267-934-4725. Call for prices and other details.



—*Larry Misevičius*

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